July 13, 2010

Senator Harry Reid,
Majority Leader

Senator Mitch McConnell,
Minority Leader

Senator Barbara Boxer, Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works

Senator James M. Inhofe, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works

Senator Blanche Lincoln, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

Senator Saxby Chambliss, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

Senator Jeff Bingaman, Chairman
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison,
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation

Senator Max Baucus, Chairman
Committee on Finance

Senator Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member
Committee on Finance

Honorable Senators:

On behalf of our farmer, rancher and rural supporters, we the undersigned organizations urge you to pass comprehensive climate and energy legislation in this session of Congress. Dependent on weather and the availability of natural resources, agriculture is uniquely vulnerable to climate change and farmers and ranchers will be among the first impacted by increases in unpredictable weather events, rising temperatures and shifts in rainfall. The ability of farmers and ranchers to produce abundant crops and livestock is of course critical to our food security and the viability of our rural and urban communities. It is of importance to all of us to pass a comprehensive climate and energy bill that supports sustainable agriculture and provides resources for farmers to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Not only will farmers and ranchers be among the first affected by a changing climate, but agriculture is also a key sector that has the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing additional environmental benefits. Widespread agreement among the research community concludes that agriculture can help reduce human contributions to climate change and should play a role in effective mitigation and adaptation initiatives. More specifically, sustainable farming systems can help us minimize emissions of greenhouse gasses and increase sequestration of soil carbon, thereby reducing GHGs in the atmosphere.

Farmers should be supported in moving towards climate-friendly practices with the resources necessary to establish sustainable practices. Current research indicates that many sustainable and organic agriculture practices, such as using cover crops, leaving crop residue on fields, managed rotational grazing, and reducing or eliminating the use of synthetic fertilizers, can all contribute to reducing our nation's GHG emissions. By implementing innovative and sustainable farming practices we can reduce the heat-trapping gases emitted from farming and increase the amount of carbon stored in the soil on those farms.

We believe that a climate and energy bill should include support for the agricultural sector to move towards sustainable practices with scientifically proven climate benefits for both mitigation of emissions and adaptation of agriculture to changing conditions. USDA conservation programs that provide research, technical assistance and financial incentives, for agriculture to address climate change mitigation and adaptation should also be supported.

We appreciate your consideration and urge you to work towards passage of a strong climate and energy bill, which will help protect farmers, and our food supply while moving agriculture towards a viable and sustainable future.

Sincerely,

Melody L Meyer, VP Global Initiatives
Albert's Organics
Santa Cruz, CA

Carrie Balkcom, Executive Director
American Grassfed
Denver, CO

Hill Grimmett & Gailmarie Kimmel, Co-Directors
Be Local Northern Colorado
Fort Collins, CO

Jeanne Merrill, Policy Director
California Climate and Agriculture Network
Sacramento, CA

Y. Armando Nieto, Executive Director
California Food & Justice Coalition
Berkeley, CA

Meredith Niles, Climate and Agriculture Consultant
Center for Food Safety
Washington, DC

Traci Bruckner, Rural Policy Program Assistant Director
Center for Rural Affairs
Lyons, NE

Kathy Tibbits, Moderator
Cherokee Small Farm Project
Stilwell, OK

Erin Wirpsa Eisenberg, Executive Director
CitySeed
New Haven, CT

David Runsten, Policy Director
Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)
Davis, CA

Ingrid Kirst,
Community CROPS
Lincoln, NE

Bill Duesing, Executive Director
Connecticut NOFA
Oxford, CT

Cecil Wright, Director of Sustainability
CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley Family of Farms
La Farge, WI

Molly Rockamann, Founding Director
EarthDance
Ferguson, MO

Poppy Davis, Executive Director
Ecological Farming Association
Watsonville, CA

Jim Oldham, Rebecca Fletcher, Executive Director, Outreach & Services Coordinator
Equity Trust, Inc.
Turners Falls, MA

Noah Fulmer,
Farm Fresh Rhode Island
Pawtucket, RI

Molly Anderson, Principal
Food Systems Integrity
Bar Harbor, ME

Dave Murphy, Founder / Director
Food Democracy Now!
Clear Lake, IA

Alice Chalmers, Executive Director
Future Harvest - Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture
Fairplay, MD

Alice Rolls, Executive Director
Georgia Organics
Atlanta, GA

Steve Tiwald, Executive Director
Green Earth Institute
Naperville, IL

Patrick Kiley, Development Director
Greenhorns
Red Hook, NY

Jim Harkness, President
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)
Minneapolis, MN

Cindy Fitterling, President
Institute for Rural America
Ames, IA

Dr. Herbert Bernstein, President& Chief Scientist
Institute for Science and Interdisciplinary Studies
Hampshire College
Amherst, MA

Marian Riggs Gelb,
Executive Director
Iowa Environmental Council
Des Moines, Iowa

Chris Petersen, President
Iowa Farmers Union
Ames, IA

Brad Redlin, Director, Agricultural Program
Izaak Walton League of America
St. Paul, MN
Nadia Johnson, Food Justice Coordinator
Just Food
New York, NY

Frederick Kirschenmann, President
Kirschenmann Family Farms
Windsor, North Dakota

Adam Warthesen, Federal Policy Organizer
Land Stewardship Project
Minneapolis, MN

Kiera Mulvey, Executive Director
Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition
Madison, WI

Andrea Brower and Keone Kealoha, Co-Directors
Malama Kauai
Kilauea, HI

Margaret Krome, Policy Director
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
East Troy, WI

Brian Beauchamp, Policy Specialist
Michigan Land Use Institute
Traverse City, MI

Bonnie Wideman, Executive Director
Midwest Organic Services Association (MOSA)
Viroqua, WI

Kathy Hadley, Executive Director
National Center for Appropriate Technology
Butte, Montana

Liana Hoodes, Director
National Organic Coalition
Pine Bush, NY

William A. Powers, Executive Director
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society- NSAS
Ceresco, NE

Duane Hovorka, Executive Director
Nebraska Wildlife Federation
Lincoln, NE

Annie Cheatham, President
New England Farmers Union
Shelburne Falls, MA

Judith F. Gillan, Founding Director
New England Small Farm Institute
Belchertown, MA

Steve Gilman, NOFA-IC Policy Coordinator
Northeast Organic Farming Association -- Interstate Council (NOFA-IC)
Stevenson, CT

Essie Hull, Co-President
New Hampshire Chapter
Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA-NH)
Concord, New Hampshire

Dennis Schill, Chairman of the Board
Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society
LaMoure, ND

Dave Henson, Executive Director
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center
Occidental, CA

Carol Goland, Executive Director
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Columbus, Ohio

Dana McVay
Ohio State Beekeepers &
East Central Ohio Beekeepers

Chris Schreiner, Executive Director
Oregon Tilth
Corvallis, OR

Bob Scowcroft, Executive Director
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Santa Cruz, CA

Kathryn Gilje, Executive Director
Pesticide Network Action North America
San Francisco, CA

Michael Sligh
RAFI-USA
Pittsboro, NC

Ryan Rose, President
Red Willow Center, Inc.
Taos, NM

Michael Dimock, President
Roots of Change
San Francisco, CA

Nancy Hirshberg, Vice President Natural Resources
Stonyfield Farm, Inc
Londonderry, NH

Sylvia M. Kovács, Executive Director
Sustainable Highlands NJ
Hackettstown, NJ

Jill Davies, Director
Sustainable Living Systems
Victor, MT

Michael Funk, Chairman of the Board
UNFI
Rocklin, CA

Brise Tencer, Washington Representative,
Food and Environment Program of the
Union of Concerned Scientists
Washington, DC

Mark Schonbeck, Editor
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Floyd, VA

Jo Ann Baumgartner, Executive Director
Wild Farm Alliance
Watsonville, CA

Lynne Fessenden Executive Director
Willamette Farm and Food Coalition
Eugene, OR

Leigh Adcock, Executive Director
Women, Food and Agriculture Network
Ames, IA

Eric Mader, Assistant Pollinator Program Director
The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
Portland, OR